

“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God” (Matthew 5:8)

LIGHT from Christ's LIFE

Volume 17, Episode IX

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UPPER ROOM FELLOWSHIP MINISTRY

James 3:14

“But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your heart, do not be arrogant and so lie against the truth.”

PRAYER:

♦ For God's special BLESSINGS upon ALL ADT disciples — students.

♦ For a special DISCERNMENT and clearer SPIRITUAL DIRECTION.

♦ For an authentic HUNGER for spiritual transformation.

♦ For NEW DOORS OPEN by God.

♦ For URFM's spiritual and material SUPPLIES.

Amen!!!

1 Peter 1:22

“Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love one another from the heart”

SPIRITUAL GROWTH and EMOTIONAL HEALTH

2. Emotions and Spiritual Growth (Part 1)

Motto:

“Examine me, O LORD, and try me; Test my mind and my heart.” –King David (Psalm 26:2)

“Watch over your heart with all diligence, for from it flow the springs of life” –King Solomon (Proverbs 4:23)

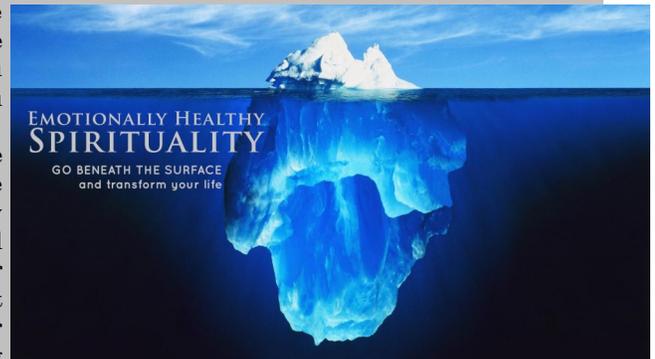
“YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND” –Jesus Christ (Matthew 22:37)

Introduction:

“How are you?” This is a question we hear or ask more often than any other questions. When we are asked this question, more often than not, we don't pause and think about it; we just answer short canned answers, like: “Good!” “Fine!” “All right!” “Pretty good!” “Quite well!” The reality is that people don't have time for deeper conversations. Therefore many settle for shallow relationships with other human beings and with God. But, if we would really take the time and think deeper about how we really are, would our answer be different? Ponder upon:

What are we thinking about? How we are really feeling? What is the true state of our emotional life? So, let me ask you again: “How are you?” How would you answer now?

Take a few moments and meditate upon your life's experiences. Dig a little deeper, go further into the past. How about the time when your father scolded you for no apparent reason? When your mother raised her voice and lashed at you in anger? When your big brother broke your favorite toy? When you big sister stole your most favorite doll? How about when your teacher gave you a bad grade even though you studied so hard? When the captain of the cheerleader's squad did not pick you, but instead selected your best friend because she was prettier than you? How about when you did not make the football team because you were not that athletic? When your boss promoted one of his buddies even though you were more qualified than him?

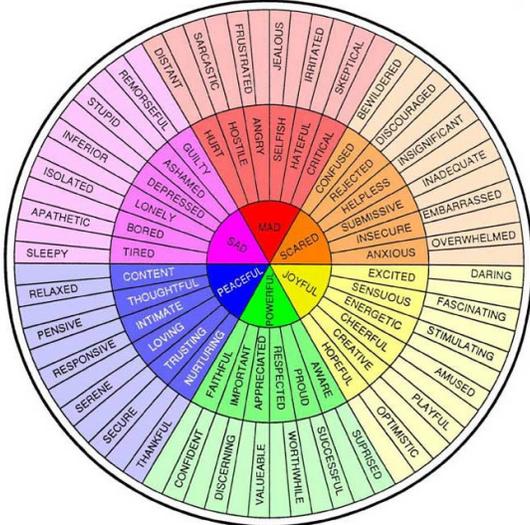


Are emotions something that is negative or positive? Does God want us to be happy? What to do with our emotions?

Let's go even deeper, shall we? How about when you were invited to sleep over at your friend's house then her big brother introduced you to the misery of sex, and stole your virginity? When you were bullied by a bigger guy just two blocks from school? When your uncle played nice with you, then, when nobody was home, molested you? How about when your father came home under the influence of alcohol and beat up your mother in front of you? When your parents split because your father cheated on your mother or vice versa?

Should we go on reflecting upon some of the church related experiences? Remember when sister so and so or brother so and so did not treat you nicely? When you heard, via the grapevine, that brother X or sister Y spoke negatively about you? How about when the pastor ignored you and your family (over and over again) but showed multiple favors to a particular brother because he is among the bigger donors of the church? And on and on it goes.

Do you mean to tell me that all of these and many other incidents did not affect you at all?



So, let me ask you again: "How are you?" Are all these little or big scars from the past completely resolved? Are the recent incidents completely resolved? We all know that people don't bury their emotions dead; they bury them alive. And when we least expect it they show up in the present situation.

Emotions and why are they important?

Are emotions something that is negative or positive? Does God want us to be happy? What do we do with our emotions? The ability to feel comes from being created in the image of God. There are numerous emotions that human beings experience. It is important for us to identify our emotions. When we have troubles with this, our relationships suffer. As Christians, being able to have close relationships with other Christians requires the skill to relate at the emotional level as well. Cultivating an intimate relationship with God requires more than our intellect, it requires being in touch with our emotional side too. The abil-

ity to communicate about our feelings is important in building and maintaining close relationships.

Emotions are complex. Simply put, emotions are feelings on the inside, which are caused by pain or pleasure, and they will try to move you in a certain direction. According to some theories, "they are a state of feeling that results in physical and psychological changes that influence our behavior." (Psychology Second Edition. (41 Madison Avenue, New York, NY 10010: Worth Publishers), 2011. p. 310.)

The Feelings Wheel, developed by Dr. Gloria Willcox, helps people learn about and to identify their emotions. This tool consists of an inner circle with five sectors and two outer concentric circles. The sectors are each labeled with the name of a primary feeling: mad, sad, scared, joyful, powerful, and peaceful.

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The outer rings contain names of secondary feelings related to the primary ones. To properly use this tool, we must first become familiar with it. Simply use the Wheel to identify what you are currently feeling. Most people can easily identify the six primary emotions from the center. Start with one of those feelings then explore it further to discover associated feelings. By doing this you can better understand your current state of mind and emotions. We may have to do these

type of exercises every so often so we can develop the skill of being in touch with our emotions.

It is widely recognized now that our emotions are acting like deception detector. Robert E. McGee explains that, "Our hurtful, negative emotions are similar to the body's mechanism of creating fever." When we have a fever, we pause and take the right medication to get well. We should do the same when we experience some of those negative emotions. We should stop and explore what is going on with our soul and take the proper steps to ensure that the soul gets well. Unfortunately many people resort to drugs, alcohol, pornography, or other activities in order to deal with the hurtful and negative emotions. But if we are honest with ourselves, and with God, the Holy Spirit can assist us in the process of 'emotional healing'. The Spirit is the supernatural deception detector. If we pay attention to our negative feelings and go to God in prayer, the Holy Spirit brings us to the truth. And as the Lord Jesus promised, "You will know the truth, and the truth will make you free" (John 8:32).

Should we consider our feelings and emotions as part of the process of spiritual growth? In our relationship with God, should we ignore the emotional side of our humanity entirely? Not at all! I think that the Scripture is very clear that God cares for our emotional side as much as for our spiritual side. In his letter to Thessalonians, Paul writes that God is fully committed to sanctify us wholly: spirit, soul, and body. (See 1 Thess. 5:23-24).

God is an emotional Being:

God has the ability not only to think and to will, but also to feel. In other words, God is an emotional Being. The Bible speaks about God's emotions like anger (Psalm 7:11; Deuteronomy 9:22; Romans 1:18), laughter (Psalm 37:13; Psalm 2:4; Proverbs 1:26), Compassion (Psalm 135:14; Judges 2:18; Deuteronomy 32:36), Grief (Genesis 6:6; Psalm 78:40), Love (1 John 4:8; John 3:16; Jeremiah 31:3), Hate (Proverbs 6:16; Psalm 5:5; Psalm 11:5), Jealousy (Exodus 20:5; Exodus 34:14; Joshua 24:19), Joy (Zephaniah 3:17; Isaiah 62:5; Jeremiah 32:41).





Jesus expressed emotions during His earthly ministry:

Jesus freely expressed emotions during His earthly ministry as well. The Gospels record that the Lord Jesus felt compassion; He was angry, indignant, and consumed with zeal. Jesus was surprised and amazed; He rejoiced very greatly and was full of joy and He loved. Also, the Lord was troubled, greatly distressed, very sorrowful, depressed, deeply moved, and grieved. The Lord Jesus sighed; He wept and sobbed; He groaned and He was in agony, and He was greatly desired.

Holy Spirit, the Third Person of the Trinity is an emotional Being as well:

The Holy Spirit is a Person not a Force or a Power. The Holy Spirit is the Third Person of the Trinity. As a person the Holy Spirit expresses a variety of emotions.

Unbelievers can commit blasphemy against Him. (See Matthew 12:31-32, 1 John 5:16). Believers can lie, deceive, or tempt Him. (See Acts 5:3-4, 9). The Holy Spirit can be grieved. (See Ephesians 4:30).

Church goers can despise or insult the Spirit of God. (See Hebrew 10:29).

Based on the vast amount of scriptural evidence we can state, very confidently, that emotions are an important part in the process of spiritual growth. "Scripture not only speaks about emotions, it also speaks to and through our emotions. The Bible itself is emotional literature, filled with emotional expression and designed not just to communicate with our rationality but also to stir us emotionally, thus affirming our emotionality." (D. G. Benner, "Emotion," Evangelical Dictionary of Theology, ed. Walter A. Elwell (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1984) 352.)

Emotions and spiritual growth:

The main objective of the New Testament is to grow in Christlikeness. Let's never lose sight of this! (See Romans 8:28-29, Colossians 3:9-10). It is accurate to assume that this includes both Christlike behavior as well as Christlike emotions. As Paul states in first Timothy chapter one verse five: "the goal of our instruction is love." And the fruit of the Holy Spirit is love, including all characteristics of the agape love: joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness. (See Galatians 5:22-23). In fact, only those virtues make us more like Christ. I am sure that a sound theology leads to thinking Godly thoughts and have Godly affections after Him.

If we carefully read and study the Bible, we realize that the Word of God contains the norms for our thinking, our behavior, and for our emotions and affections. King David encourages his audience to "Rejoice" and "Be glad". Example: "I will rejoice and be glad in Your loving kindness, Because You have seen my affliction; You have known the troubles of my soul" (Ps. 31:7). "And my soul shall rejoice in the LORD; It shall exult in His salvation" (Ps. 35:9).

The same thing is expressed by Paul: "Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice!" (Php. 4:4). "Rejoice always" (1 Thess. 5:16).

Peter tells us to cast all our anxieties on Him, because He cares for us. (See 1 Peter 5:7). Our emotions are part of the overall manifestations of the image of God in us – His beloved children.

God designed and created us in such a way that we desire our own good. As human beings we naturally seek that which we perceive will lead to a good life, happiness, and pleasure. Also, we avoid that which we perceive as bad or aversive or painful or unpleasant. In other words, the pursuit of happiness and aversion to pain and suffering is a basic principle of life. This has been etched into our very DNA. So we better listen and obey the Designer and the Creator and live happy and fulfilling lives.

"See, I have set before you today life and prosperity, and death and adversity; in that I command you today to love the LORD your God, to walk in His ways and to keep His commandments and His statutes and His judgments, that you may live and multiply, and that the LORD your God may bless you in the land where you are entering to possess it. But if your heart turns away and you will not obey, but are drawn away and worship other gods and serve them, I declare to you today that you shall surely perish. You will not prolong your days in the land where you are crossing the Jordan to enter and possess it. I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that I have set before you life and death, the blessing and the curse. So choose life in order that you may live, you and your descendants, by loving the LORD your God, by obeying His voice, and by holding fast to Him." (Deut. 30:15-20).

God:

God is a Person and a Personable Being. A proper understanding of emotions must begin with the Creator and end with the Creator. He is the Designer of it all. God is the chief example of a Person and of personhood. He is Absolute Personality, depending on nothing for existence or definition. God's answer to



Moses' question: "What is Your Name?" (Ex. 3:11) is mindboggling: "I AM WHO I AM" (Ex. 3:14). God is the only self-existent, totally independent Person.



God is a Being who thinks, chooses, feels, speaks, loves and hates, get angry and expresses pleasure and displeasure. He acts like a person because He is a Person. God is a Holy Trinity – Three Persons but One God: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.

Jesus Christ:

The supreme revelation of who God is has been fully displayed in the Person of Jesus Christ. Jesus' words are powerful! "I and the Father are one." (John 10:30). Moreover, "the Father is in Me, and I in the Father." (John 10:38). Jesus goes even further saying that: "He who has seen Me has seen the Father" (John 14:9). According to the author of Hebrews Christ "is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature" (Heb. 1:3). Paul also writes that Jesus "is the image of the invisible God" (Col. 1:15).

God's nature and His character:

If we study the Bible carefully and attentively we arrive at the supreme conclusion that the nature of God is love (1 John 4:8) and His character is Holy. (Read Isaiah 6:3, Matt. 5:48, 1 Peter 1:16, Rev. 4:8). He is the Holy One, the perfect Personality. However, we have to be careful here, even though God is holy and He is love, "the reverse is not true; neither holiness nor love is God." (Sam R. Williams, Ph. D., Toward a Theology of Emotion, Southern Baptist Journal of Theology, winter, 2003). God is infinitely greater! That is why it is so important to deepen our relationship with God and pursue intimacy with Jesus by the revelation of the Holy Spirit (John 16:13-15). As we grow in the grace and knowledge of God, the Holy Spirit will reveal who we are as persons (Eph. 1:15-23) and to know what kind of persons we should be (1 John 3:1-3). Therefore we are called to fix our eyes on Him (Heb. 12:2) and to set our minds on things above (Col. 3:1-3). By doing this we understand what it means to be a real person – new being transformed into the likeness of God who created us (Eph. 4:24, Col. 3:10).

We stated already that God is a Person with emotions. Throughout the Scripture we have seen that God, in His relationships with His creatures, expressed various emotional manifestations. All these emotions and manifestations made God neither better nor worse. He is still faithful to His nature and character, and true to His supreme perfections. We can say that God is unchangeable and self-determining of His intrinsic nature as a holy and eternal being. God is unchangeable in His moral perfections. God cannot lie. This would be against His very essence as the God of Truth. So He is faithful in keeping His Word.

The chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever:

We are created by Him in His image and our supreme calling is to glorify Him now and eternally. This, and only this, will give us the highest fulfillment. Jesus told His disciples, "My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, ..." (John 15:8). As many reformed believers know from the Westminster Shorter Catechism: "The chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever." (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Westminster_Shorter_Catechism. Accessed on August 16, 2016). Therefore to be truly fulfilled is to know God and to know God implies to know ourselves. As John Calvin wrote in Institutes of the Christian Religion, "Nearly all wisdom we possess, that is to say, true and sound wisdom, consists in two parts: the knowledge of God and of ourselves (Calvin, Institutes, 1.1.1. <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/calvin/institutes.iii.ii.html>. Accessed on August 16, 2016). The same paradox caused St. Augustine to fervently pray: "Grant, Lord, that I may know myself that I may know Thee." (Augustine, Confessions, AD 400) <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/augustine/confess.pdf>. Accessed on August 16, 2016). Indeed, to know God is the very essence of eternal life. Jesus tells us: "This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent" (John 17:3). Wow! What a deep wisdom and powerful understanding! There is no wonder that the wisest earthly leader, King Solomon wrote: "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge; ..." (Prov. 1:7, 9:10). And what is fear? Fear is one of the most powerful of all emotions! The reality is that if we turn that emotion towards God in holy reverence, we discover the inexhaustible fountain of divine wisdom. And from the Bible's prospective, this should be the starting point.

(To be continued. . .)

With love in Christ,

Vally Vaduvu

Spiritual Mentor / Life Coach

P.S.: Thank you for your continuous prayers and financial support!!!
"The one who is taught the word is to share all good things with the one who teaches him." (Gal. 6:6).

If you are looking for personal spiritual life coaching sessions or if you desire to have a personalized mentorship plan designed for your spiritual growth please contact me immediately!

